
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 May 2019

by Jan Hebblethwaite MA, Solicitor (non-practising)

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/G2815/D/19/3222031

Ashley Farm House, Main Street, Upper Benefield PE8 5AN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Thomas Crewe against the decision of East Northamptonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 18/02373/FUL, dated 11 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 5 February 2019.
 - The development proposed is a double bay garage with room above.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is the impact of the proposed building on the character and appearance of the Upper Benefield Conservation Area (UPCA) and the setting of Ashley Farm House which is a listed building.

Reasons

3. The existing house on the appeal site is set back from Main Street and comprises a traditional farmhouse. The appeal site lies within the UPCA and Ashley Farm House is also a Grade II Listed Building. The listing of the house describes its construction as squared coursed limestone with a Collyweston slate roof.
4. Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of this listed building and the desirability of preserving the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
5. The character of the UPCA is a linear, generally residential, village along the A427. Properties in the area are largely constructed using stone and are of varying ages which gives the village a traditional appearance with a distinct local identity. The listed building is a traditional farmhouse and appears to be one of the older properties in the village. As such, its siting within the plot with open space at the front is an important part of its setting.
6. The proposed development would be sited forward of the farmhouse and perpendicular to it, on the western boundary. The neighbouring properties to the west are roughly on the same line as the existing house on the appeal site.

7. The design and access statement sets out that the appeal building would be an oak framed structure. The Council's delegated report described the structure as having timber boarding with a blue slate roof. Although the plans do not contain details of ridge or eaves height, the appellant's agent confirmed at the site visit that the ridge height would be roughly level with the top of the lintel over the window in the cross wing closest to the proposed garage. The plans show that the garage would be 2 metres from the hedge forming the western boundary, which would remain, and some 4.5 metres from the road frontage.
8. The properties forming the village almost exclusively follow the line of the road. Whilst there are different building lines throughout the village, the houses in the immediate locality of the appeal site follow roughly the same line. The introduction of a substantial building forward of that line would be incongruous in the street scene and would adversely affect the character of the UPCA. The siting of the proposed building in front of the farmhouse would also adversely impact the setting of the listed building by closing in the open frontage.
9. Turning to the design and materials of the timber-clad proposed building it is clear that it would be at odds with the traditional stone-built host building and would be out of place in the village street scene as described above. This harm is further exacerbated by the scale of the proposal as a result of the room in the roof with dormer windows which would increase the bulk of the structure when viewed against the host building.
10. Taking both of the above factors into account I consider that the proposed building would cause harm to the significance of both the setting of the listed building and the UPCA.
11. Paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that where a development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
12. The Appellant has not outlined any specific public benefits of the proposal, although there could be some short-term economic benefits associated with the construction process.
13. I acknowledge that the appellant has stated that the proposal is a reduced version of a previous application for a triple bay garage and that the only available site for a garage on the property is in the front garden. I also acknowledge that the appellant has made reference to other outbuildings in the vicinity, although at my site visit, I did not see any such outbuildings to the front of nearby premises.
14. Taking the above into account, I consider that none of these factors outweigh the harm I have found to the UPCA and the setting of Ashley Farm House.
15. For the above reasons the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the UPCA and the setting of Ashley Farm House contrary to Policy 2 and Policy 8 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011 – 2031 which amongst other matters, seek to ensure that development proposals should complement their surrounding historic environment through form, scale, design and materials and that development should create distinctive local character by responding to the site's immediate and wider context and local character. It would also be at odds with the heritage aims of the Framework.

Conclusion

16. Whilst I have taken into account all other matters raised, it is for the reasons I have set out above that the appeal is dismissed.

Jan Hebblethwaite

INSPECTOR